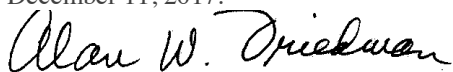


DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

RESOLUTION TO CREATE A UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM TASK FORCE ON METHANE EMISSIONS FROM HYDRAULIC FRACTURING OPERATIONS ON UNIVERSITY LANDS (UL)

On behalf of the Faculty Council, Chair Steve Hoelscher (Professor, American Studies) submitted the following resolution to create a University of Texas System Task Force on Methane Emissions from Hydraulic Fracturing Operations on University Lands (UL). The Faculty Council will act on the resolution at its meeting on December 11, 2017.



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary

General Faculty and Faculty Council

The University of Texas at Austin

Arthur J. Thaman and Wilhelmina Doré Thaman Professor of English and Comparative Literature

RESOLUTION TO CREATE A UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM TASK FORCE ON METHANE EMISSIONS FROM HYDRAULIC FRACTURING OPERATIONS ON UNIVERSITY LANDS (UL)

Faculty Council Resolution

As outlined in the University of Texas System's 2009 *UTS 169 Sustainability Practices Policy*, UT System "institutions will continue to implement well thought out initiatives that increase efficiencies, reduce emissions, and promote sustainability practices."¹ To uphold the University of Texas System's own sustainability policy, we, the UT Austin Faculty Council, urge Chancellor McRaven as head of the UT System and Mark Houser, CEO of University Lands (UL), to commit to creating a methane-control plan for hydraulic fracturing operations on University Lands.

Resolution:

The UT Austin Faculty Council urges Chancellor McRaven and Mark Houser to form a Task Force of UT scientists and engineers to properly collect UL methane emissions data, research appropriate and affordable best practices to reduce emissions, and develop a methane-control plan to cut emissions by 50% within the next 5 years.

The Problem and Rationale

The earth's average temperature has risen by 1.5°F over the past century and, without significant reductions to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, is projected to rise an additional 0.5 to 8.6°F over the next hundred years.² This temperature rise will increase the severity of floods, droughts, and heat waves, and will lead not only to large financial losses, but also to loss of life as we have seen in the recent devastating landfall of Hurricane Harvey and other storms.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the international body for assessing science related to global warming that was established by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program, avoiding the worst impacts of climate change requires reducing greenhouse gas emissions at least 80% from 1990 levels by 2050.³

Methane, one of the most potent of these greenhouse gasses, is 84 times more powerful than carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the first two decades after its release, and it is responsible for over 25% of the global warming we're witnessing today.⁴

There are approximately 9,000 oil and gas wells drilled on 1.4 million of the 2.1 million acres of land owned by University Lands (UL), a department administered by the University of Texas System.⁵ An analysis done by Environment Texas, based on EPA and other publicly available data, shows that from 2009 to 2014 UL oil and gas produced the CO₂ equivalent of 11.7 million tons of climate pollution. This pollution carries the same short-term climate impact as 2.5 million cars on the road. A separate analysis by the Environmental Defense Fund, incorporating production and emission data from the 19 counties with University Lands, calculated a similar, but slightly less, quantity of emissions for the same time period.

¹ *UTS 169* Section 2, <https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/default/files/policies/uts/uts169.pdf>

² US EPA, https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/climatechange/climate-change-basic-information_.html

³ IPCC Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>

⁴ Environmental Defense Fund, <https://www.edf.org/methane-other-important-greenhouse-gas>

⁵ University Lands, <http://www.utlands.utsystem.edu/Home/OGDevelopment>

Solutions

Simple and affordable modifications to oilfield operations, such as leak detection and repair technologies, can cut methane emissions dramatically. Oil and gas producing states like Colorado, California, and Wyoming, as well as individual companies like Exxon Mobil, have already started requiring emissions reductions. Companies that drill on University Lands, however, are not currently required to control their methane pollution.

The threat of global warming means we must change our dirty energy habits now. In a time when federal and state governments are failing to pursue environmental protections, entities like universities must take the lead in climate change mitigation where they can. It's time for the UT System to demand that the oil companies that drill on its lands commit themselves to best practices.